

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 15, 2019

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

As you know, today marks 25 days since the federal government lapsed in appropriations and triggered a partial government shutdown – now the longest shutdown in American history. I write to express my grave concern regarding the consequences of this catastrophic, self-manufactured partial shutdown on my district, my state, and our country. I implore you to end this calamity as soon as possible, before it causes irreparable harm to the health, safety, security, and financial wellbeing of our government, our economy, and our neighbors and communities.

Just over one week ago, I was sworn in as the Representative of the Fifth District of Connecticut and inherited what can only be described as a national disgrace. As you know, approximately 800,000 federal employees are currently working either without pay or are completely furloughed. Many federal employees now find themselves struggling to pay their mortgages, student loans, or pay for childcare. Further, thousands more low-wage federal contractors have found themselves out of work with little recourse or hope of retroactive compensation. According to the Connecticut Department of Labor, there are roughly 1,500 federal employees living in Connecticut that work for agencies without federal appropriations and are directly impacted by the shutdown.

Many impacted workers in Connecticut have jobs that are integral to the safety and security of the nation. At Bradley Airport, in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, Transportation Security Administration officers and forty air traffic controllers are currently working without pay. In total, over 40,000 law enforcement and correctional officers, and eighty-eight percent of Department of Homeland Security employees – including members of the Coast Guard – missed their paychecks last week. The partial shutdown has undermined the security of our airports, borders, and skies in historic proportions.

I am also deeply concerned about the shutdown's impact on the housing stability of Connecticut residents that participate in low-income housing programs, like Section 8 Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA). The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has been unable to renew federal contracts for over 650 Section 8 PBRA property contracts that expired in December and January, which support thousands of low-income renters across the country. In my district alone, the contracts of 175 rental units in six cities have expired and are currently under suspension, putting the burden on private owners to absorb the difference in lost federal funds.<sup>1</sup> According to the National Low Income Housing coalition, this may eventually spur landlords to raise rents on their low-income tenants – a large number of whom are disabled or seniors living on a fixed income.

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<sup>1</sup> National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Impacts of Government Shutdown on Affordable Housing Programs*, (Washington, D.C., 2019) [https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Shutdown-Map\\_0119.pdf](https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Shutdown-Map_0119.pdf)

Further, one year after the passage of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, it has never been more critical for the IRS be at full strength to assist taxpayers in navigating their taxes—especially given the new cap on state and local tax deductibility that is particularly pertinent and harmful for Connecticut residents. Despite these new hurdles, Americans will not be able to access taxpayer customer service or taxpayer assistance centers during the shutdown, even as the beginning of tax filing season fast approaches. While the Administration recently promised that the shutdown would not impede the dispersal of tax refunds, the IRS's shutdown contingency plan dictates that only 12 percent of IRS staff are expected to continue working during the crisis. The shutdown therefore promises to freeze or delay over \$140 billion in tax refunds – a crucial financial life-raft for many Americans.<sup>2</sup>

Farmers in the Fifth District are already starting to feel the pinch of the shutdown. The Department of Agriculture (USDA) has shut down programs that help farmers meet environmental standards and halted its rulemaking and implementation of the desperately needed new Farm Bill. Agriculture subsidies have also run dry, leaving farmers without loans for rural development. In a letter to my office, Benjamin Freund, a dairy farmer in East Canaan, Connecticut, wrote that “we are in limbo in a time when we need certainty.”

Indeed, the shutdown of the USDA has also cast a pall of uncertainty and anxiety on a critical lifeline for the more than 38 million Americans – including over 400,000 Connecticut residents – that rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Many of these participants are children or elderly. While the USDA has guaranteed food stamp benefits through February, funding will dry up by March if the shutdown continues. To provide February benefits, USDA has instructed state SNAP agencies to rush and deliver benefits early this month, shifting responsibility from the federal government to state SNAP agencies like the Connecticut Department of Social Services.<sup>3</sup> While Connecticut participants are expected to receive February funds, the unprecedented early payments will potentially cause rampant confusion and personal budgetary problems for many in my district.

The National School Lunch Program, also administered by the USDA, is set to run out of funds by March. As a public-school teacher, I personally know how important this program is to keep students fed and focused in the classroom and am outraged that the shutdown endangers the solvency of this program and endangers school-children. For those whose ability to put food on the table has not been directly impacted by the shutdown, there is still much to worry about. Almost all routine FDA food safety inspectors have been furloughed, leaving 80 percent of the U.S. food supply – from vegetables, to packaged foods, to baby formula – vulnerable, and putting American lives in jeopardy.

Not to be forgotten are the reverberating effects of the shutdown on communities in the Fifth District. Because of the lapse in Violence Against Women Act funding at the Department of Justice that occurred with the shutdown, women's shelters and rape crisis centers throughout the district will struggle to keep their doors open for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, putting the needs of survivors at risk. As five of the nine sexual assault crisis centers in Connecticut are located in my district, this issue is of particular importance to me. Local economies and small businesses are also hurting. Businesses that serve federal employees have seen their customer base slashed or have seen federal funds or government

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<sup>2</sup>Richard Rubin, “In a Shutdown, IRS Will Take Your Money, but Give No Refunds,” *Wall Street Journal*, (New York, New York), January. 2, 2019.

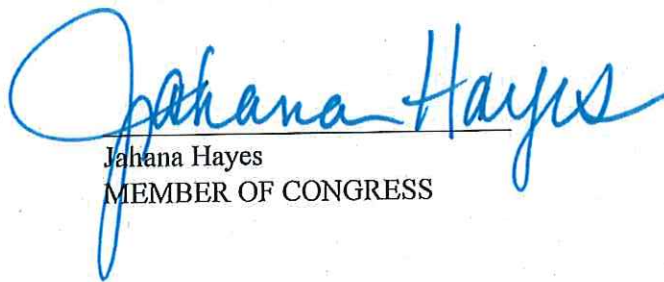
<sup>3</sup> Associated Press, “USDA: Food Stamps Will Be Funded Through February,” *New York Times* (New York, New York), January. 9, 2019.



contracts on which they rely stalled. From Fairfield County to Litchfield County, people in Connecticut are struggling.

It is crystal clear that this shutdown is severely detrimental to Connecticut, and our country. I urge you to immediately end the cycle of chaotic and capricious governing and the weaponization of essential federal services, by backing off your unpopular demands and supporting the sensible bills passed by the House to reopen the government, sending federal workers and Americans throughout the Fifth District and country back to work.

Sincerely,



Jahana Hayes  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS